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Islamic Principles to Combat Radicalization in Academia: An Exploratory Study in Pakistani Context

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Abstract

Pakistan's geopolitical location and events like the Afghan *Jihād*, 9/11, and the War on Terror have adversely affected our social, religious, and geopolitical realms. Numerous perpetrators are engaged in violent extremism due to their exclusive interpretations of Islamic injunctions, which mainly deviate from the basic Islamic principles. These developments in our region have given rise to the phenomenon of radicalization in the socio-religious and political spheres. Unfortunately, this radicalization has infused the higher education sector and threatened Pakistan's security and safety. According to this study, 'radicalization' is a process in which people or groups adopt extreme social, religious, and political views to discredit or reject others' coexisting and contemporary ideologies. The status quo, the delicate law & order situation, and developing trends and ideas at the societal level further lead to polarization and division. This paper aims to identify numerous adherents' of radicalization in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). It also explains the central concept of theological radicalization and how genuine Islamic principles combat these misconceptions. Analytical and exploratory research methodology has been adopted for this study. This research concludes that by adopting the Islamic principles of *Waṣatīyyah* (Moderation and the Middle Path) and '*Ilm-al-Ehsān* (to do beautiful things or Excellence) one could lead a successful life as ordained by Allah. A reversal of the rise of radicalism and extremism is possible with the help of moderates and reformers in society and academia to incorporate Islamic socio-religious norms and values. This paper recommends that academia and society must adopt moderation, diversity, and pluralism grounded in Islamic teaching to curb radicalism.

Keywords: Combating radicalization, Islamic principles, Pakistani academia, Religious modesty

Introduction

After 9/11, 2001 the Afghan *Jihād*, Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979; and the War on Terror 2001 have pushed Pakistani society toward extremism and radicalization. In the last 20 years, Pakistan has seen numerous acts of violence, bomb blasts, and suicide attacks all over the country. These attacks have killed 800,000 innocent people. This radicalization crept into our universities, and the number of young people with extreme religious views has increased. Many things lead young people to become radicalized and have a polarized view of the world. The national curriculum of a country and the teachers who teach it significantly affect how the next generation thinks. Pakistan has been unable to develop a national and humanistic education policy from the start. Even now, Pakistan's education system fails to do anything to help people develop social awareness and good human behavior. Pakistan's curriculum does not teach tolerance, compassion, or Muslim morality and ethics, and we have failed terribly at making the region a place of peace, security, and brotherhood. Extremism has grown in Pakistan partly because intellectuals and academics do not see

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it as an intellectual and academic challenge. This is because intellectuals who disagreed with the government during the Afghan war were discouraged at the state level.

For this analysis, the following definition of radicalization will be used, which is derived from a combination of other significant definitions 'Radicalization is a process involving an individual or group whereby they are indoctrinated to a set of beliefs that support acts of terrorism, manifesting in one's behavior and attitudes.¹ Radicalism, however, does not equate to terrorism.² Since terrorism is a fundamental component of the concept of radicalism, the term 'terrorism' will also be defined. Terrorism is currently understood with better clarity than radicalization. According to the Council of the European Union and for this review, *terrorism* will be defined as "acts committed to seriously intimidate a population, unduly compelling a government or international organization to perform or abstain from performing any act, or seriously destabilizing or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic, or social structures of a country or an international organization."³ Radicalization is the process by which people adopt extreme views, including beliefs that violent measures need to be taken for political and religious purposes.⁴

This paper defines Radicalization as "people or groups of people are becoming more or more extreme in their thoughts, feelings, and behavior. It is observed, the Clerics and Religious scholars see the phenomenon from a socio-political perspective but through religious prisms. They consider Talibanization and radicalization to be an outcome of state policies, and the state's failure to enforce *Sharī'ah* in the country."⁵ Youth at the university level and their attitudes toward society are barely studied in Pakistani academia. Studies related to youth inclination toward radicalization or extremist attitudes are rarely discussed. It has been also observed that the religion is often misused by political figures (Religious and Secular) without any solid evidence to nurture the public according to the true Islamic norms and values in Islamic Republic of Pakistan. In other words, the instable and fluctuating religious ideas between Islamic scholars, state and society has created confusion in the mind of students.

2. Research Methodology

This paper is descriptive research based on primary and secondary data used to deduct the finding qualitatively. The relevant research material related to the determinants of radicalization has been extracted from various journals, reports, books, published research work, web links, and research articles. The study has been structured in light of the research theme of the researcher's Ph.D. dissertation. The Analytical and critical research methodology has been adopted to identify key factors contributing to the radicalization of Pakistani society in general and academia in particular. Primary and secondary sources have been employed in presenting the Islamic principles for counter-radicalization in HEIs in Pakistan.

¹Riyad Hosain Rahimullah, Stephen Larmar, and Mohamad Abdullah, "Understanding Violent Radicalization amongst Muslims: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Science* Vol.1, no. 1 (2013): 19-35.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Mujtaba Rathore, and Abdul Basit, "Trends and Patterns of Radicalization in Pakistan," *Conflict and Peace Studies* Vol. 3, no. 2 (2010): 15-32.

⁵Muhammad Amir Rana, "Litterateurs," Response to Extremism in Pakistan," *Conflict and Peace Studies* 3, no. 1 (2010): 23-30.

3. Literature Review

There are numerous examples that show violent radicalism not only within Pakistan's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) but also outside of universities. Mashal Khan, a student at Bacha Khan University in Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), was killed by an angry mob in 2017. Most of the people in the mob were students, but some non-academic staff members of the university were also there to stir up the students. They thought Khan had posted blasphemous Facebook posts.⁶ Pakistan has much violent radicalization outside of university campuses. One example is Saad Aziz, a graduate of an elite university in Karachi called the Institute of Business Administration. He ran an *Al-Qaeda* sleeper cell in the city with a few other people and was found to have killed members of religious minorities and low-ranking security officials.⁷ Based on how bad this new problem with VE (violent extremism) in universities is, Pakistani government officials have already talked about shifting the focus of their efforts to stop violent extremism (CVE) from students and graduates to HEIs. For example, Pakistan's National Counter Terrorism Authority has made a deal with the country's Higher Education Commission to put in place some measures, such as a course on PVE (Prevent Violent Extremism) that is taught at universities, Higher Education Commission Pakistan [HECP], 2017.⁸

Pakistani university students often fight with each other because of their varying ethnicities. Pakistan has had ethnic rivalries for a long time. The government has often found it hard to deal with these differences and agree on infrastructure projects like the *Kalabagh Dam* project. Pakistan broke up in 1971 because of ethnic differences between East and West Pakistan. However, there are still ethnic rivalries, mostly between minority ethnic groups, that question Punjabi's dominance at the national level. Punjabis have the most power in Pakistan because they make up about half of the country's population. Because of this, they have the most seats in the upper and lower houses of parliament and more jobs in government and the military.⁹ It has caused other ethnic groups to have problems with the Punjabis and led to the rise of ethno-nationalism, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, and Baluchistan.

There are 194 public and private sector Higher Education Institutes operating in the country, having a total enrolment of 1.576 million approximately.¹⁰ Students come to the public sector HEIs to study from all over Pakistan. They come from different ethnic, religious, and political groups. Officially, students are not allowed to participate or indulge in political activities on university campuses, despite that there are still student unions and groups. Pakistan's political parties have student groups on university campuses all over the country to show that they are popular among educated young people and cause riots for their political gains. Students at public universities group. The fact that there are political student groups in HEIs shows that they want a say in things like admissions, grades, housing commitments, and fee discounts. For example, the University of Engineering and Technology in Lahore is a center for *Jamat-ud-Dawa* activities, and the *Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba* (IJT) has much power at the University of Punjab in Lahore, which is one of the

⁶Zahid Ahmed Shahab, and Qamar Abbas Jafri, "Drivers of Violent Extremism in Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan," *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 13, no. 3 (2020): 230-244, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17467586.2020.1821068>.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰*Pakistan Economic Survey 2018-19*, chapter 10 Education, 166. https://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_19/10-Education.pdf

oldest universities in Pakistan.¹¹ When there are far-right and far-left (Ethno-nationalist) student groups in universities, they may compete for power. It could lead to violent fights between student groups like IJT and *Pashtun* Students Federation, the People's Student Federation, and Muslim Student Federation. In recent years, there have been many more violent fights between student groups at public sector universities, especially Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU), and International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI). The IJT (*Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba*) tries to impose a specific far-right political ideology on campus and does not like most nationalist and secular student groups, such as QAU.¹²

Both ethnic and religious differences cause student fights. We have found out that students at both universities have been exposed to violent fights and hate literature that involved students from their universities. At QAU, students often fight over ethnic differences or rivalries, but at IIUI, hate speech and violence are more often caused by religious differences. It is because ethnic student groups dominate QAU, and religious groups dominate IIUI. Concerning the recruitment of university students by extremist groups, some participants from both universities said they had seen their peers join militant groups.¹³

Is radicalization inherently rooted in religion or is extremists' merely using religion? An informed assessment would conclude that all significant worldly and divine religions are founded on messages of peace, harmony, and non-killing.

In Islamic philosophy, the idea of peace has a crucial position. One of the most common meanings of the Arabic term ‘*salam*’ is ‘peace,’ (submission, surrender to the will of God), and it has the exact origin of the word Islam, which is the name for the religion. One of the 99 names for God (Allah) in Islam, *As-Salam* is invoked by devout Muslims worldwide, further demonstrating the centrality of the idea of peace in Islamic theology and practice. It is also well known that Muslims greet each other with the words “Peace be onto you” (*As-salamu Alaykum*), to which the recipient responds, “And peace be on you” (*Wa-Alaykum as-salam*).

After the Afghan *Jihād*, the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, 9/11 in 2001, and the War on Terror, the rise of *Jihādist* were considered as religiously motivated violence. As Hashmi argues, Religious radicalization is primarily different from other forms as it is based on ideology. Religious minds mean firm beliefs and loyalty to significant sources of *Dīn* and the value system it offers. Another significant threat to Muslim harmony is the *Takfir* (Accusing another Muslim of heresy, *Kufr*) or ex-communication. However, it contradicts the value system of Islam that stresses unity among the believers and reject *Fitnah* (communal discord). Ironically, the religious mechanism created to preserve pluralism has become a tool in the hands of radicals to do the opposite. In the later period, Muslim jurists started to show radicalization on sectarian grounds and started giving *fatwa* (verdicts) on *Takfir* to other Muslim sects. During the 19th to 20th centuries, the enmity between the *Hanafi* school and *Ahl-e-Hadīth* school turned so intense that Naseem Razi¹⁴ argued that these

¹¹Nauman A. Abdullah, and Muhammad Saeed, “Extremism in Education in Pakistan: University Teachers’ Thoughts,” *Ankara University Journal of Faculty of Educational Sciences (JFES)* 49, no. 2 (2016): 55-70.

¹²Zahid Ahmed Shahab, and Qamar Abbas Jafri, “Drivers of Violent Extremism in Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan,” *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 13, no. 3 (2020): 230-244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17467586.2020.1821068>.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Naseem Razi, “Theological Extremism and its Effects: Pakistan Perspective,” *Journal of Social Science for Policy Implications* 2, no. 4, (2014): 59-72.

so-called Muslim scholars called out their opponent in *masālik* as "Badtar as Hanud" (worse than Hindus). It is essential to recognize the gravity of the free exercise of *takfir*. By the time of al-Ghazali (d. 505 A.H.), the open practice of *takfir* and counter-*takfir* had grown so popular that it compelled him to write a book specifically to deal with the issue, titled *Faysal-al-Tafriqah bayn al-Islam wa al-Zandaqah*.¹⁵ (*The Decisive Criterion for Distinguishing Faith from Masked Infidelity*).

The concept of *al-walā'ū wal-barā'ū* (loyalty and disavowal) in Salafism is the root cause of legitimizing armed struggle against Muslim rulers. Mohamed Bin Ali argued that this concept of *al-walā'ū wal-barā'ū* has evolved. In the beginning, it was used to fight *shirk* and apostasy, but later it took a severe turn against Saudi rulers and even went as far as to the ex-communication (*Takfir*) of them all. *Takfir* provides legitimacy to the acts of violence against those declared *kāfir*, individuals, or entities. This ideology has opened the validity of the armed struggle against Muslim rulers and thrived in the growth of *Jihādi* movements like *Al-Qā'idah* and ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) in the Muslim world.¹⁶

Another significant issue is the distortion of the concept of *Jihād* by ISIS and its ideological partners. They do not adhere to the classical interpretation of *Jihād* and war but instead focus on the fighting aspect to justify their resort to violence to meet their geopolitical interests.

The relationship between ignorance and extremism is close. The Kharijites are an excellent case in point here. 'Ali (RA) Mu'awiyah (RA), their representatives in the arbitration, and everyone who agreed with them were deemed as *kafir* by the *Muhakkimah*,¹⁷ the first of the Kharijites, because they "accepted the authority of human decision," by agreeing to have the dispute settled through arbitration, which, in their view, ran counter to the Qur'ānic principle that "there was no decision but God's."¹⁸

In developing countries like Pakistan, ineffective political participation, dynastic politics, elite ruling class dominance, corruption at all political levels, and future uncertainty has created a perfect atmosphere for growing radicalization.

Pakistan has three diverse systems of education that generally demonstrate the students' socioeconomic class. Pakistan ranks 126th out of 138 nations in the 2016 Global Competitiveness Index¹⁹ mainly to poor health and education metrics. A shocking 24 million children are not in school, and 47 percent of our youngsters aged 5 to 16 do not receive formal education. The education budget in the country is also the lowest in South Asia. One may reasonably assume that Pakistan's educational system is analogous to 'Educational Apartheid,' with the elite's English-language education system utterly different from the education systems followed by millions of other children. Dilawar Khan and Hafeez U. Khan argued that the process of radicalization is not linear or

¹⁵Yusuf Al-Qaradāwī, *Al-Imam al-Ghazali bayn Mādhīhi wa Nāqidīhi* [The Decisive Criterion for Distinguishing Faith from Masked Infidelity], (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1994), 184.

¹⁶Mohamed Bin Ali, "Al-Walā' Wal Barā' in Wahhabism: From a Tool to Fight *Shirk* to *Takfir* of Muslim Leaders," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture* 7, no 1 (2019): 1-16.

¹⁷They held that in agreeing to arbitration, Ali committed the grave sin of rejecting God's judgment (*hukm*) and attempted to substitute human judgment for God's clear injunction, which prompted their motto 'judgment belongs to God alone'. From this expression, which they were the first to adopt as a motto, they became known as the *Muhakkima*.

¹⁸Al Qur'ān, Āl-Maidah 5:44.

¹⁹Dilawar Khan, and Hafeez Ullah Khan, "Radicalization and Divergent Education System in Pakistan—Challenges and Future Prospects," *National Defence University Journal* 32, no. 1 (2018): 234.

predetermined, and various psychological, social, individual, and collective factors contribute to it. The research concludes by establishing a significant relationship between divergent educational systems and radicalization while emphasizing the remedial role education can play in curbing radicalization. In a conclusion statement, the authors' state, "The polarization has, in turn, caused personal disorder among youth, giving rise to unstable radical immoderate minds within the society."²⁰

4. Discussion on Islamic Principles to Combat Radicalization

Keeping in view all the diversified factors of growing radicalization in society, the researcher studied the counter-radicalism insights and approaches that Islam offers to curb this significant threat. Islamic education is one of the most effective methods to adopt as a means of conflict avoidance.

4.1. Principle of *Waṣatīya* (Moderation) in Islam and De-radicalization

English word Radicalization means the act or process of motivating someone to become more extreme or radical in their thoughts on political, social, or religious matters. Another synonym for radicalization is extremism. In the Arabic language, the word extremism can be translated into the meaning of *ifrāṭ* wa *al-tafrīṭ*, which is used to express either end of anything.²¹ As explained by Naseem Razi, it is said *afraṭa Yūfrīṭu* leads to excess or immoderation. *Al-Ifrāṭ* means the excess of anything, Extreme, intemperance and, exceeding limits, while *Al-tafrīṭ* is taken in the meaning of endpoints declining something, small and negligible.

Religious immoderation has become one of the most daunting challenges of today's world. Islam, as a universal religion, presents a complete code of life for all humankind. The Qur'ān used the word "Al-Ghūluw" which can be fairly decoded as extremism, self-burdening with confidence beyond one's ability, to include exaggeration and hyperbole. The phrase's definition is "raising someone or something to a level higher than its fundamental reality." *Al-Tashaddūd* means overbearing, violent, or extremely strict, and *Al-Tanattā* stands for extravagant and overly strict. Islam does not condone extremism, especially regarding matters of faith, as one can see from a close reading of the religion's teachings. Muslims are strongly encouraged to distance themselves from extremist beliefs and follow the religion's middle path of moderation and temperance. The *Ummah* of Muhammad (PBUH) is a just, balanced community, as mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān, "And so We have made you 'believers' a balanced, (Moderate) community so that you may be witnesses over humanity and that the Messenger may be a witness over you."²²

Using the Qur'ān as a guide, what would a Muslim should mean by "moderation," and what is the significance of the word "wasatiyyah," which comes from the phrase "ummah wasat," in the Qur'ān.²³ This term is fundamental because it is a title that God Himself gave Muslims. It shows from the start what the Muslim nation (*Ummah*) stands for and their role and duty toward the rest of the world. According to Ibn Faris (d-395 A.H.) the word "Ummah" comes from "umm" and has four close meanings: "the origin" (*al-asal*), "the point of reference" (*al-marji'*), "the group" (*al-jama'ah*),

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Naseem, Razi, "Theological Extremism and its Effects: Pakistan Perspective," *Journal of Social Science for Policy Implications* 2, no. 4, (2014): 59-72.

²²Al Qur'ān, Al Baqarah, 2:143.

²³Ibid.

and “religion” (*al-dīn*).²⁴ At first, ‘*wasat*’ meant the middle point between two opposing sides. Later, it came to mean the good qualities between two extremes, such as generosity (*al-jud*), which is between extravagance (*al-isrāf*) and stinginess (*al-bukhl*), and courage (*al-shajā'ah*), which is between stupidity (*al-tahawwur*) and timidity (*al-jubn*). The word is then used to talk about the person who has those traits²⁵. When the Muslims are called *ummātān wasatān*, it means that they are “the best nation” (*khayr al Ummah*), “the most excellent in virtue” (*afdal*); and that their religion, Islam, is the moderate religion, or the best of all religions. “The Moderate Nation” (*ummātān wasatān*) basically means “the true Muslims,” as shown above by the fact that they obeyed Muhammad (in true submission) by facing the *Ka'bāh* without question during prayer. This does not mean that every Muslim will act the same way, but there will always be some in every generation of Muslims *Ummah*. According to the Prophet (SAW), the word “*wasat*” in verse means “just” (*adl*).²⁶ This is the basic meaning of *wasat* and it is clear that this meaning is linked to “knowledge” and “the act of witnessing,” which can only be expected of people who have knowledge.

Knowledge and freedom (*ikhtiyār*) are essential because, without knowledge and freedom, it is impossible to be just, choose what is good, gain virtue, or be moderate. In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the hadīth (no. 7349) that explains what *wasat* means is “... that the Prophet (SAW) had told the Muslims to be with the community, namely the Learned (*Ahl-al-Ilm*).” Here, al- Bukhari makes it very clear that what is meant by ‘*ummah wasat*’ is actually “the Learned” among Muslims. The Prophet (SAW) calls them “*ta'ifah min ummati*” in another hadīth, when he says, “It is the “*Ia tazalhu ta'ifah min ummatti zahiirin 'ala al-haqq*” (A group of followers will remain predominant or victorious till the time of Hour) who are the witnesses against mankind.²⁷ So, in the end, “the witnesses against mankind” are the Learned, and the Prophet (SAW) guarantees that they will always be there in every generation.²⁸ The Learned (*'ulama'*) are the heirs of the prophets (*al-'ulama' warathat al-anbiya'*),²⁹ which means they hold on the knowledge and responsibilities of the prophets and face similar problems and challenges. In another *hadīth*, they are called “the Just” (*'adl*), and their responsibilities are as follows: “This knowledge will be held in every generation by those who are just, and they shall protect it against the falsification of the extremists, the fabrication of the deceivers and, the misinterpretation of the ignorant.”³⁰

²⁴Abu al-Husayn ibn Faris, *Mu'jam Maqayis al-Lughah*, 2 vols (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1999/1420), s.v. "ummah."

²⁵Muhammad Ba Karim Muhammad Ba 'Abd Allah, *Wasattiyyah Ahl al-Sunnah Bayna al-Firaq* (Riyad: Dar al-Rayah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', 1994/1415), 15-28.

²⁶Muhammad Bin Isma'il Al Būkhārī, *Šaḥīḥ Al-Būkhārī* (Riyad: Dār us-Salām, 1997), Hadīth no. 4487; Abū 'Īsa' Muhammad ibn Īsa Al Tirmidhī, *Jām'i al Tirmidhī* (Riyādh: Dār-us-Salām, 2007), Hadīth no. 2961; Ahmad bin Shua'b Al Nisā'i, *Sunan an Nisā'i*. ' (Riyad: Dār us-Salām, 2003), Hadīth no. 039; Ahmad bin Al Husain Al Bayhaqi, *Al Jamea Le Shuab-el-Iman* (Al-Riyad: *Maktabat ur Rushd Lin Nashr wal Tawzea*, 2003), Hadīth no. 464; Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnād Ahmad* (Al-Qahira : Dar ul-Hadīth, 1995), Hadīth no. 11068; Abdullāh ibn al-Mubārak al-Marwāzī, *al Zuhd wa al-Raqā'iq* (Al-Riyad: Dār al-Mi'raj ad-Dawliyyah. 1995), Hadīth no. 1598.

²⁷*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Hadīth no. 60.

²⁸Yusuf Al-Qaradawī, *Al-Imam al-Ghazali bayn Madhihi wa Naqidhi* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1994); *Sahih Muslim*, Hadīth no. 247, *Sahih Al- Bukhari* Hadīth no. 3640; *Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadīth no. 2484.

²⁹Muhammad bin Yazīd Ibn Mājjah, *Sunan Ibn Mājjah* (Riyad: Darussalam, 2008), Hadīth no. 223.

³⁰Al-Bayhaqi, *Al Jame Le Shuab-el-Iman* Hadīth no. 248.

The true successor is the Learned Muslims who know how to interpret Islam. Their job is to keep *Ummah* safe from three types of dangers that could make knowledge unreliable, namely:

- a. Extremists change the text (*Tarif al ghalin*) to support their beliefs and actions. This harms the integrity of the text.
- b. Falsifying the authority by the liars (*intiha'l al mubtilin*) is a practice that hurts the transmission's reliability.
- c. The ignorant misunderstand the meaning (*ta'wil al-jahilin*), which is a practice that hurts the authenticity of valid interpretation.³¹

These actions endanger knowledge, and any attack on knowledge is an attack on justice. It is a state of mind where truth and lie are indistinguishable - a condition of confusion - that, if left uncontrolled, corrupts knowledge. When knowledge is tainted, all kinds of extremism emerge, and injustice prevails.

Muslims are considered religious moderates because their beliefs do not go too far to either extreme. They are not like Jews who refuse to accept Jesus as the Messiah or Christians who venerate him to the point of making him a deity. They must stay within the boundaries set forth for them and are regularly reminded in the Qur'an that they must not act in the way of those who disobey the law, like the people of the book. The Holy Qur'an condemns the Jews for believing in some of the commandments of the Torâh and denying some that were forbidden by law. The gist of the debate is that the Holy Qur'an forbids radicalism (extremism). When the Jews and the Christians chanted, *Ghuluw*, Allah forbade them in clear words: "Say, "O People of the Book! Do not go to extremes in your faith beyond the truth, nor follow the vain desires of those who went astray before 'you'. They misled many and strayed from the Right Way."³²

Going all the way (*ghala fil al-amr*) signifies going beyond what is considered normal or acceptable (*jawaza haddahu*).³³ The definition of an extremist is someone who has no regard for restrictions on his thoughts, words, or deeds. However, one must remember that there are "limits" to everything. Numerous verses in the Qur'an emphasize the importance of being aware of and keeping within "the boundaries of Allah" (*Hudûd Allah*), and warn that doing otherwise is a sign of unbelief, hypocrisy, ignorance, and injustice. When extremism and fanaticism become ingrained in the Muslim community, everyone suffers. They grow so dedicated to one way of doing things that they act irrationally or make foolish commitments, ultimately becoming liberals and ignorant people who destroy religious comprehension and good actions. Both of these trends counter Islam's fair and balanced teachings.

Ibn Manzur traces *ghuluww* back to the Arabic word 'ghala,' which means "heavy" or "difficult" in contrast to "light" or "easy." To "al-*ghuluw fi al-din*" is to make religious practice challenging; nevertheless, this challenge is only prompted by crossing a line (*mujawazat al Had*) that is not meant to be crossed. "*llyakum wa al ghuluww fi al-din*"(do not be extreme in religion) is a phrase whose literal translations are "to go overboard" (*al-tashaddud fihi*) and "beyond the limit"

³¹ Muhammad Asham bin Ahmad, "Moderation in Islam: A Conceptual Analysis of Wasatiyyah," *Tafhim: IKIM Journal of Islam and the Contemporary World* 4 (2011): 29-46.

³² Al Qur'an, Al Mâ'idah 5:77.

³³ Muhammad Asham bin Ahmad, "Moderation in Islam: A Conceptual Analysis of Wasatiyyah," 29-46.

(*mujawazat al-hadd*).³⁴ Here, “the limit” refers to what is recommended by Islam, a religion whose teachings are straightforward and whose practices are accessible to most people.

The word *ghuluww* has multiple meanings, and one of them is *a'da*, which means to spread anything (such as evil or disease) to other people. The People of the Book had done this to their faith, mixing in enough deception that it was no longer recognizable as such. Many people had been led astray because they had put their faith in what was ultimately the product of evil desire rather than truth. As stated earlier, extremism and *Ghūluw* are transgressions. Ḥadīth also prohibits “extremism” and radicalization. “Beware! The extremists perished,” saying it three times.”³⁵ Narrated by Abdullah Ibne Masood in *Sahih Muslim* Radical views are even condemned in the Ḥadīth Mubarakah and that moderation is essential to counter the growing radicalism in society. Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) has said, it was narrated that Abū Al- ‘Alīyah said, “Ibn Abbas narrates: ‘Like these. And beware of going to extremes in religious matters, for those who came before you were destroyed because of going to extremes in religious matters.’”³⁶

Another excellent example of peaceful coexistence with other communities from the Prophet's (SAW) life is the famous Charter of *Madīnah* (*Mīthāq-i-Madīnah*) in 622 AD. This document can be called the first written constitution of fundamental human rights with diverse values for all citizens of *Madinah*. After a decade of this charter comes the farewell pilgrimage, another milestone in the history of human rights. It can be derived from one of the points that states, Non-Muslims should be regarded as a community alongside Muslims. They, like Muslims, will be granted religious freedom. Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) has given the concept of diversity among multicultural and multi-religious locales of *Madīnah* by safeguarding the fundamental constitutional rights of all living there.

Al-Attas said that education is the process of teaching *adab*, or discipline, to the body, mind, and soul by “recognizing and acknowledging the right and proper place, station, and condition in life and to self-discipline in positive and willing participation in playing one's role following that recognition and acknowledgment.”³⁷ When looked at in this way, education can be seen as a way to create a moderate nation (*ummatan wasatan*). Since we mean by “moderation,” the Arabic word “*wasatiyyah*,” there is no moderation outside of Islam. So, what is needed is an open and honest conversation that aims to find and defend the truth. For Muslims to have this kind of dialogue, they need to be intellectually prepared and perfected through proper education (*ta'dib*).

Islam believes in inclusivity and the spirit of heterogeneity and rejects violence in all its forms. The Holy Qur'ān and Prophet's (SAW) sayings are very clear on abolishing the customs of discrimination and bigotry. The Holy Prophet's (SAW) anti-racist message still echoes today on the occasion of the last Hajj he said, “All humans are descended from Adam and Eve. There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, or of a non-Arab over an Arab, and no superiority of a white person over a black person or of a black person over a white person, except based on personal piety and righteousness.”³⁸

Qur'ān also provides another place for the idea of *T'ārīf* mutual recognition of different others, and this recognition paved the way for dialogue and peaceful coexistence. In another place, Qur'ān

³⁴ Al Qur'ān, Al Baqarah 2:185.

³⁵ Muslim bin Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim*, Ḥadīth no. 4731.

³⁶ Ahmad bin Shuaib Al Nisāī, *Sunan an Nisāī*, Ḥadīth 3057.

³⁷ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1978; Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993), 105-106. <https://libraryoflights.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/islam-and-secularism-attas.pdf>.

³⁸ Ahmad bin Al Husain, *Al Bayhaqi*, Hadith no.5137.

has enjoined Muslim *Ummah* with the principle of *Shūra*’ or consultation. This is how Muslims must solve their problems. It allows all to discuss their issues and arrive at a moderated solution. Another aspect of the same principle of the middle path is the principle of reason disagreement *Ikhtilāf*. The substance of moderation lies in *Ikhtilāf*, which provides space for freedom of expression for participation with a degree of tolerance to others' points of view. Then we also read in the Holy Qur'ān about *Mujādalah* or peaceful engagements with different others. According to Qur'ānic advice, they provide space for reasonable exchange whenever they engage in different communities. This is also an advocacy of the middle path grounded in the sources of Islam. This is *Waṣaṭīya* in practice, avoid inflicting hardship on others and creating ease for people.” According to the Prophet (SAW) of Islam, “Make things easy for people and do not make them difficult, give them the good news and avoid repelling them.”³⁹

In Muslim studies, Islamic moderation includes theology, ethics, belief systems, legal status, and politics. Islam believed in equality and detested hate speech and discriminatory practices to build a peaceful and cohesive society where all citizens are treated equally. By adopting these golden principles in academia, we can eradicate the growing radicalization of youth.

4.2. Principle of *Şabar* (*Al-Tasāmūh*) and De-Radicalization

In Islamic writing, the word for tolerance is *al-tasamuh*. Respect the beliefs of others (*ihtiram 'aqāid al-akharin*). *Tasamuh* comes from the root word ‘*Samah*,’ which means “simplify.” Tolerance (*tasamuh*) generally means respecting differences to work toward equality. Tolerant people can respect differences so they can live together peacefully in a society with many different kinds of people.⁴⁰ Regarding Islam, tolerance means being patient with a practice or opinion with one who disagrees. This idea may surprise many people because they think tolerance is just another word for acceptance or agreement. Islamic tolerance means one can disagree with someone but still have a strong moral commitment to treat that person with respect. So, tolerance in Islam means patiently putting up with something one does not like or approve of. *Shārī'ah* has taught Muslims how to get along with people of other religions in public life. Tolerating non-Muslims in public means giving them the same rights to live together peacefully. To help the country, people of different religions need to get along. *Sharia* has taught Muslims how to get along with people of other religions in public life. Tolerating non-Muslims in public means giving them the same rights to live together peacefully. To help the country, people of different religions need to get along.

The central concepts presented in Islam for personal goodness and high moral character are the principles of *Şabar*, or Patience, and *Hayā*, or Modesty/humility. The principle of *Ahsān* being good to others, dignified existence in anger, and provocation Principle of *Hilm* and ‘*Urf*, the general customs in the culture of the society, is also recognized in Islamic law in engagement with others and in personal conduct. Principle of ‘*Afūw* or forgiveness. Qur'ān describes their character as, “Those who swallow their anger, and they forgive people and Allah loves the good doers.”⁴¹

No one grants forgiveness to others, but Allah grants them honor and dignity. Forgiveness is a mark of bringing dignity and honor, which has spiritual rewards. Religion is the advice of compassion and kindness to people. Even though Islam is the religion most people desire, Allah forbids His people from forcing their religion on others.⁴² He has also told His people to be tolerant of other

³⁹ Muhammad Bin Isma‘īl Bukhārī, *Şaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Hadīth No 152.

⁴⁰ Syed Burhanuddin, and Abbas Arfan, “The Fundamental Principles of Tolerance (*Al-Tasāmūh*) in Worship and Public Affairs under Islamic Perspective,” (2020): 1-7.

⁴¹ Al Qur'ān, Āl-i-‘Imrān 3:134.

⁴² Al Qur'ān, Al-Baqarah 2:256.

religions. Likewise, in the Holy Qur'ān, there is a whole chapter that explains religious heterogeneity, "Say, O Prophet (SAW), "O you disbelievers! I do not worship what you worship, nor do you worship what I worship. I will never worship what you worship, nor will you ever worship what I worship. You have your Dīn, and I have my Dīn."⁴³

Tolerance is the central principle in Islam, and its great dignity and higher moral standard show this great character in the face of provocation and anger toward opponents. Islam calls for the unity of humankind, but that does not mean to make things similar for all but to arrange different things harmoniously. In the early history of Islam, we observe tolerance and supremacy of law/peace in society. Peace and coexistence are essential for each other in creating a healthy society. However, after the fall of Muslims, these principles were changed into intolerance and radicalization, which led to violence. To lessen the danger of radicalization, the golden principle of tolerance and forbearance must be adopted but with limitations advised by *Sharī'ah*. Religious tolerance can be divided in two categories, tolerance with non-Muslims in the field of worship and tolerance with non-Muslims in public affairs. Both of these fields have some permission and limitations, confined by the *Sharī'ah* law. Failure to recognize these boundaries create radicalism and extremism in the form of intolerance or excessive tolerance towards other communities.

4.3. Principle of *'Ilm* (Knowledge) and *Iḥsān* (Goodness) and De-Radicalization

In order to curb the growing radicalization in our academia, Islam presents two more principles to adopt in the time of provocation and resentment. One of them is the Islamic concept of '*ilm*' or knowledge. The first revelation to Prophet was about *Ilm*, and he has been advocating acquiring knowledge from his *Ummah* all his life. Islam stresses learning from each other regardless of class, color, or creed discrimination. "According to Abu Hurairah, the Prophet of Allah (SAW) stated, "the wise utterance is the lost property of the believer; wherever he finds it, he is more worthy of it."⁴⁴

In Islam civilization, '*Ilm*' or knowledge can be acquired from anyone. Learning from others means acquiring the knowledge; and never entails that one ought to adopt the religion of their mentor. Learning without benefiting others leads to radicalism, which is against Islam's true spirit. This radicalism is further linked with acts of extreme violence and creates *fitna* (Communal Unrest) in the world.

In order to create an inclusive and peaceful society, Islam stresses the need for helpful knowledge and condemns those who use religion as a tool to disrupt the peace of the community. The complete denial of religious aspiration by secular forces will further widen the gap of enmity and may lead to chaos in society. This can also pave the way for militancy and religious violence. Islam does not segregate worldly and spiritual life as other ideologies did. Islam demands its adherents to prepare not only for this life but also for the next. There is equal importance on Ḥaqūq Allāh and Ḥaqūq al 'Ibād. If someone is praying to Allah, he is equally responsible for treating fellow humans with dignity and respect and fulfilling all the obligations and rights conferred upon him. In Islam, politics (*Dawla*) and religion (*Deen*) go hand in hand with their limits. Spreading actual Islamic education can curb the evil of growing radicalism.

The other principle of *Ehsān*, or goodness in Islamic thoughts, presents a glaring response to growing radicalism in academia. In the spiritual self of Islam, there is so much wealth and richness of advice and practice from the great leader. The institution of *Ehsān* has been derived through *Hadīth*

⁴³ Al Qur'ān, Al-Kafirūn 109:1-6.

⁴⁴ Abū 'Isa' Muḥammad ibn Isa Tirmidhī, *Jām'i al Tirmidhī*, Hadīth no.43.

*e Jibraeīl.*⁴⁵ This principle of *Ehsān* is the great moderator in Islamic society to live in peaceful coexistence. We need to inculcate a higher moral character in our students, like sacrifice, internal accountability, and compassion for all without judging other person's religion. By spreading the *Ilm ul Ehsān* teachings of multicultural values, we can curb the danger of radicalization. Divine poetry of the Unity of Allah and love for His creation may also be included in the curriculum to make the next generation aware of their tolerant and liberal past.

4.4. Principle of *T'āwun 'al al-Birr wat-Taqwa'* (Cooperation in Goodness and Piety) and De-radicalization

Islam is facing unprecedented global opposition based on misunderstanding and misinterpretations of religious commands. It is a need of the hour to improve the better understanding of Islam against the face of global terrorism and extremism. Qur'ān advocates the principle of "*T'āwun 'al al-Birr*" (Cooperation in Piety or Good work) and "*walā T'āwun 'alal ithm wal 'udwān (no Cooperation in Transgression and Sin).*" It's a recognized principle of Islam for moderation and our relation with other communities. We read in the Qur'ān cooperation in good works and piety but must not cooperate in transgression and sins. This principle of cooperation among Muslims and other communities' manifests Islam's compulsion to pursue the middle path and bring out the best in everyone. The idea of "cooperation in good works and piety" but "not cooperation in transgression and sin" is also a golden principle for establishing a peaceful society. The Qur'ān provides guidelines for how Islam moderates from within, "Cooperate with one another in goodness and righteousness, and do not cooperate in sin and transgression. And be mindful of Allah. Surely Allah is severe in punishment."⁴⁶

This verse emphasizes the importance of working together and supporting one another in virtue and piety. It is fascinating to see how these two words, *birr*, and *taqwa*, have been used. *Birr*, or virtue, refers to good positive actions, whereas *taqwa* refers to refraining from evil actions. Thus, the verse encourages two types of cooperation: doing good and refraining from evil. The Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) encouraged Muslims to work together. One of the fundamental rules of a Muslim society is to cooperate with others for good. When believers work together, they are motivated and fervent, and their spirits are lifted. There is also Divine assistance and blessing in the act. Each believer is encouraged by the other's response, and in this way, a spark of goodness can grow into a great light. The light then encompasses society and thus revitalizes the entire community.

Teachers are seen as the first line of defense when it comes to teaching and guiding students to have the right ideas and a noble character. So, his role and standing in the world of education have a big impact on the success of this mission. Teachers who talked to their students and had conversations with them did a lot to teach their students the values of Islam that Prophet (SAW) brought. Islam teaches its people to have good qualities like integrity, honesty, tolerance, love for others, and other traits that lead to a social life full of security, peace, and prosperity. A good teacher must, of course, have the right skills and knowledge to help their students learn, so that the process of transferring knowledge can go smoothly. When Islamic teachings are misunderstood and taught in ways that are at odds with each other, it can lead to radical younger generations. Therefore, Islamic resources and a direct understanding under the majority of scholars are very important for making agents of change in the country that have an Islamic character.

4.5 Conclusion

⁴⁵ Muslim bin Hajjaj Al Qushyri, *Sahīh Muslim*, Hadīth no.8.

⁴⁶ Al Qur'ān, Al Mā'idah 5:2.

- Based on the Islamic counter-radicalization insights, it is concluded that the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge is a binding duty of all Muslims. It is also discovered that knowledge holds a significant role in development of Islamic civilization, culture and moral values. Moreover, *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* also promote knowledge and the value of Islamic education.
- The primary purpose of education in Islam is to develop a high human moral character in its adherents. Another powerful principle to fight radicalization or extremism is the doctrine of moderation adopted by educationists to create an atmosphere of love, compassion, and trust among students. There is a need to redesign and republish Islamic education to re-establish its credibility and produce the young generation, which creates a more tolerant and peaceful world based on the principles of *Shar'īah*. Another Qur'ānic principle to indoctrinate is the concept of tolerance and modesty in the students. It can only happen if Pakistan has dedicated scholarly teachers to instill the Islamic spirit into their students and can transform the lives of all.
- This study also observes that being an ideological state, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan needs to ensure practical knowledge and take concrete steps towards merging Islamic Teachings and Islamic Civilization. In the Pakistani education system, most students get knowledge as part of theology and the performance of religious rituals and creeds. Still, they do not get it as a basic strategy of character-building education based on primary sources of Islam. Therefore, it needs time to prove Islam as a Faith, code of life and matter of civilization. It's also observed that most of the time, the openly anti-state and anti-religion activities guide the students towards radicalization. Therefore, it's also a need for time to stop and discourage these activities because it's against freedom of religion and sometimes create confusion in young minds.

4.6 Recommendations

- The following recommendations are proposed to de-radicalize the students. Creating and applying a single, uniform, the balanced education system would be a significant step towards de-radicalization process.
- Science and technology-oriented and skilled-based curriculum, as per the 21st century requirements, would be another milestone to curb the threat of radicalization without compromising on religious traditions.
- Teachers should get training to improve their professionalism in universities so they do not encourage students to indulge in extreme or fundamental views.
- The curriculum should also be reformed, and Islamic education should be part of the curriculum so that universities can help spread tolerance, perseverance, and brotherhood in society.
- There is also a dire need to nurture and train people according to the true Islamic Teachings of the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* concerning fundamental rights which ought to be a mandatory state duty in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

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